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ABSTRACT

Georgia's Gainesville College (GC) conducted a study to determine the associate degree three-year graduation rates from Fall 1994 to Spring 1997. In 1994, the majority of entering students were white non-Hispanic; almost all of the graduates studied were in this race category. Graduation rates were calculated for full-time and part-time students and broken down by gender, self-declared race/ethnicity, and whether students earned the associate degree at GC within three years. In addition, data was collected on those who transferred from GC to another two-year college or to a senior college/university. Findings indicated that about one in five of the first-time, full-time students who entered GC in 1994 received an associate degree by the spring of 1997. Fifty-four students received an associate degree from GC within three years, while the remaining 25 completed their degree program in only 2 years. Furthermore, full-time students had higher graduation rates than part-time students, and females had higher rates than males. The study confirmed that GC's graduation rate of 21% is superior to the average three-year graduation rate of 12.6% for two-year colleges within Georgia's university system. Tables of data are provided. (YKH)

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ASSOCIATE DEGREE THREE-YEAR GRADUATION RATES FALL 94 TO SPRING 97 GAINESVILLE COLLEGE

Dr. John Hamilton, OPIR

April 1998

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Associate Degree
Three-Year Graduation Rates
Fall 94 to Spring 97
Gainesville College

Dr. John Hamilton, OPIR
April 1998

Summary

About one in five (21%, 79/376) of the first-time, full-time students (N = 376) who entered the College during the fall of 1994 received an associate degree from the College by the spring of 1997 (i.e., a three-year graduation rate for the College of 21.0%). This three-year graduation rate is an improvement from the previously reported rates of 19.3 percent for the fall of 1989 to the spring of 1992 and 20.6 percent for the fall of 1991 to the spring of 1994. Within the University System of Georgia, the College's graduation rate is second only to South Georgia College (26.8%). Moreover, the College's rate of 21.0 percent compares favorably to the average three-year graduation rate for two-year colleges in the University System of Georgia of 12.6 percent for the fall of 1994 to the spring of 1997 and meshes well with data from the Fall 1997 ACT Survey which indicated that 18.2 percent of the students enrolled at the College seek an associate degree. Thus, there appears to be a positive correlation between student aspiration and goal attainment with respect to the associate degree.

Introduction

There are several reasons to track the three-year graduation rates of a two-year college: First, there is a strong push in higher education in general and within the University System of Georgia in particular to create academic environments in which students can graduate within 150 percent of the time it takes to complete a degree program. Studies indicate that the faster a student progresses through their plan of study, the greater their commitment to reaching their goals. Since public funds are used to subsidize the cost of higher education, the state's resources are used most efficiently and effectively when students at a two-year public college graduate within three years of their first entry.

Secondly, it is important for an institution to thoroughly understand the dynamic of a student's journey through the institution and strive to increase the number of associate degrees granted and the timeliness of the process. There is a strong link between associate degree attainment and eventual success with earning a baccalaureate degree. Earning the associate degree is one of the important academic outcomes of a two-year institution. Consideration of three-year graduation rates forces the institution to think about and attempt to reduce the "bottlenecks" that students face. It also allows the institution to develop an idea of the number of students who earn an associate degree in three-years in order to develop realistic goals for benchmarking.

The U.S. Census Bureau (1996) reports that 23.6 percent of Americans 25 years or older are college graduates. This is an encouraging increase from the 1990 estimate of 21.3 percent. The most current figures for Georgia (1990) indicate that the percent of college graduates for this age group is 19.3 percent (15.4% for Hall County). Even though 1996 figures are not available for

higher education attainment, it is likely that the State of Georgia still lags behind the national average. Therefore, all efforts across the state to increase college-going and to improve the efficiency at which degrees are earned is beneficial to positioning the state to reach out into the next millennium with an educated work force capable of handling the technological and complex societal challenges of the future.

Notes about the Study

The following three-year graduation rates are for students entering Gainesville College for the first-time in the fall of 1994. Students are counted as graduated if they received an associate degree from the College at any time up until the end of the spring of 1997. Three-year graduation rates are calculated for both full-time (enrolled for 12 or more quarter credit hours) and part-time students (less than 12 quarter credit hours). An enrollment status of full- or part-time is based on the number of credits students took during the fall of 1994. Hence, a student who was full-time during the fall of 1994, but part-time for the rest of their enrollment at Gainesville College was classified for the purposes of this study as a full-time student. First-time students either entered during the same year they graduated from high school or were screened to make sure that the transfer college field in the student database was "null." Thus, the first-time students in the study were new to higher education at the time of entry to the College.

The three-year graduation rates reported in this study are specific to Gainesville College. A student who transferred to another two-year college and received an associate degree would not be calculated as a graduate in this study. In addition, there is no reason to expect all transfer-oriented students to even desire an associate degree from the College. Many students in transfer programs matriculate to a baccalaureate-granting institution without earning an associate degree. Thus, the three-year graduation rate is only a reflection of the success of the College in preparing students for transfer.

Graduation rates are calculated for full-time and part-time students and broken down by gender, self-declared race/ethnicity, and whether students earned the associate degree at the College within two or fewer years or during their third year of study. In addition, data are provided about those who transferred-out from the College to another two-year college or to a senior college/university and for non-completers. Students who transferred to in-state private colleges or to an out-of-state college were "lost" from the study. Thus, the count of transfer-out students is likely lower than the actual count.

Information for the study was made available through the IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey data (GRS-2) which is available on the Internet from the Board of Regents' Office of Planning and Policy Analysis (http://www.peachnet.edu:2230/html/1998/grs224.html).

Highlights

Three-Year Graduation Rate for Full- and Part-time Students

About one in five (21%, 79/376) of the first-time, full-time students (N = 376) who entered the College during the fall of 1994 received an associate degree from the College by the spring of 1997 (i.e., a three-year graduation rate of 21.0%). The average three-year graduation rate reported for two-year colleges within the University System for the fall of 1994 to the spring of

1997 was 12.6 percent. The College appears to make it possible for students to move through the educational pipeline with reasonable speed as compared to its peers with the University System. Fifty-four of the 79 (68.4%) students who received an associate degree from the College did so within three years of entry, the remaining 25 students (31.6%) completed their degree program in two years. The only other two-year college with a higher three-year graduation rate in the University System was South Georgia College (26.8%).

The ACT Survey administered to a random selection of all of Gainesville College's students in the fall of 1997, indicated that only 18.6 percent of those enrolled at the College sought an associate degree. According to the ACT Survey, the majority of enrolled students (65.2%) attend the College with the intent to transfer to a senior college or university, but no expressed desire to obtain an associate degree. The most recent three-year graduation rate (Fall 1994 to Spring 1997) at the College of 21.0% is an improvement from the rate of 19.3 percent for the first-time, full-time cohort entering in the fall of 1989 (through to the spring of 1992).

As might be expected, first-time students who entered the College in the fall of 1994 as part-time students (fewer than 12 credit hours) showed lower three-year graduation rates (16.3%) than full-time students (21.0%). During any given fall quarter, about 40 percent of the College's enrollment is part-time.

Data from a separate, but recent study at the College that covered the time period from the fall of 1990 to the fall of 1995 complement the information expressed in this report. Findings include the following:

- Twenty-six percent (n = 150) of the 572 self-declared transfer majors entering the College in the fall of 1990 earned associate degrees at the College within five years of first entry with the majority of degrees earned by females (61%). Most of those (72%) who earned associate degrees did so within the three years of first entry.
- More than one in three (35%) of the transfer students entering the College in the fall of 1990 did not earn more than 15 academic credit hours at the College within five years nor did the great majority of these low-achieving students transfer elsewhere.
- Thirty-six percent (208/572) of the first–time students entering the College in the fall of 1990 transferred to a baccalaureate-granting institution within five years of first entry.
- The highest transfer rates occurred within the group of 150 students who attained the associate degree from Gainesville College (71% transferred).

Gender

The three-year graduation rate for the 218 females who entered the College as full-time, first-time students in the fall of 1994 was 25.7% (56/218) as compared to 14.6% (23/158) for the 158 entering males. The three-year graduation rate for the two-year colleges of the University System was higher for females (15.0%) as compared to males (9.8%) for first-time full-time students entering in the fall of 1994. This gender disparity is also evident at the time of the summer graduation commencement. For example, of the 349 students who received associate degrees from Gainesville College in the spring of 1997, 204 or 58.4% were female. Despite that the gender ratio in the states is approximately 50:50, more females are participating and succeeding in the higher education process as compared to males.

Transferred-Out Students

Of those that did not receive an associate degree from the College, quite a few did not drop out of the College, they simply transferred to another two-year college within the System (N = 19) or to a senior college or university within the System (N = 75). It is likely that some of these students either earned a degree elsewhere or are still working towards their educational goal. Of the 376 students who entered the College for the first-time in the fall of 1994 as full-time students, 79 graduated (21.0%) and another 94 transferred-out (25.0%). In some ways those who transferred-out moved beyond the reach of the institution. Some institutions amend their graduation rates to account for their "success" in sending students on to baccalaureate-granting institutions or at least to reflect the fact that many students matriculate before they earn their associate degree. One might consider an alternative method of calculating the three-year graduation rate that subtracts out the students who left the College without an associate degree. If one subtracts the students who transferred-out (94) without a degree from the starting total (376), the resulting number of students is 282. Of those 282, the 79 who graduated within three years constitute 28 percent of the total.

Race and Ethnicity

Very few first-time, full-time students (5.9%, 22/376) who entered during the fall of 1994 were in ethnic/racial groups other than White Non-Hispanic (94.1%, 354/376). Of the 22 students who were not White Non-Hispanic, two (9.1%, 2/22) received associate degrees from the College within three years of entering. Both of these students were Black Non-Hispanic. All in all there were 7 first-time, full-time Black Non-Hispanic students in the study, hence the three-year graduation rate for Black Non-Hispanics was 28.6% (2/7). Although encouraging, the three-year graduation rate for Black Non-Hispanics is difficult to consider as statistically valid since there are so few students in this racial category. By comparison, the three-year graduation rate for White Non-Hispanics was 21.8 percent (77/354). Throughout the University System the three-year graduation rates for Black Non-Hispanics and White Non-Hispanics were 5.1 percent and 14.8 percent, respectively. There were no first-time, full-time students in the racial/ethnic categories of Non-resident Alien (n = 4), American Indian or Alaskan Native (n = 1), Asian or Pacific-Islander (n = 5), or Hispanic (n = 6) who graduated within three years of entering the College.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE THREE-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

First-Time Full-Time and Part-Time Entering Students
Fall 1991 to Spring 1994 and Fall 1994 to Spring 1997
Institution-Specific Graduation Rates for Degree/Certificate Seeking Students
Breakdowns by Gender and Race/Ethnicity for Fall 1994 to Spring 1997
Dr. Hamilton, OPIR, April 1998

Notes

Three-year institution-specific associate degree graduation rates are calculated as follows: The SIRS files are searched to identify the total numbers of an institution's first-time full-time entering students who have graduated between the base quarter (Fall 89/91/94) and the year of calculation. Those numbers are totaled cumulatively, quarter by quarter, through the last spring quarter (Spring 92/94/97). Once a graduate is counted, that record is permanent, regardless of his/her subsequent enrollment status in the System. Only the graduates of the matriculating institution are counted in calculating its respective graduation rates.

Full-time students are those who enrolled for 12 or more quarter hours during their first fall quarter regardless of their subsequent course-taking and enrollment pattern.

Graduation Rates for Fall 89 to Spr 92, Fall 91 to Spr 94, and Fall 94 to Spr 97 (by gender)

	Fall 89 to Spring 92	Fall 91 to Spring 94	Fall 94 to Spring 1997 Male	Female	Total
Total full-time (>=12 qtr hrs)*			643	799	1442
Full-time, First-time (>=12 qtr hrs)**	586	574	158	218	376
Completed degree in <=3 years	113	118	23	56	79
Three-Year Graduation Rate	19.3	20.6	14.6	25.7	21.0
Completed degree in <= 2 yrs			6	19	25
Completed degree in 3 yrs			17	37	54
Transfer-out students (non-completers)+			45	49	94
To a 2-yr institution			8	11	19
To a 4-yr or higher institution			37	38	75
Noncompleters still enrolled at GC^			4	5	9
Noncompleters not enrolled at GC			131	157	288
Part-time, First-time (<12 qtr hrs)**			18	31	49
Completed degree in <=3 years			3	5	8
Three-Year Graduation Rate			16.7	16.1	16.3
Completed degree in <= 2 yrs			1	2	3
Completed degree in 3 yrs			2	3	5
Transfer-out students (non-completers)+			3	2	5
To a 2-yr institution			0	0	0
To a 4-yr or higher institution			3	2	5
Noncompleters still enrolled at GC^			1	1	2
Noncompleters not enrolled at GC			14	25	39

* All first-time and previously enrolled full-time students enrolled Fall 1994

**Enrolled during at GC for the first-time during the base quarter (e.g. Fall 89, Fall 91, Fall 94)

+ Transferred out to other University System institutions

^ Enrolled at GC during Fall 1997

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ASSOCIATE DEGREE THREE-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

Fall 1994 to Spring 1997
By Race/Ethnicity

Graduation Rates for Fall 94 to Spr 97 by Race/Ethnicity

Fall 1994 to Spring 1997	Nonresident Alien	Black Non-Hispanic	American Indian or Alsk Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White Non-Hispanic	Total
Total full-time (>=12 qtr hrs)*	23	40	2	19	27	1331	1442
Full-time, First-time (>=12 qtr hrs)**	4	7	1	4	6	354	376
Completed degree in <=3 years	0	2	0	0	0	77	79
Three-Year Graduation Rate	0.0	28.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.8	21.0
Completed degree in <= 2 yrs	0	0	0	0	0	25	25
Completed degree in 3 yrs	0	2	0	0	0	52	54
Transfer-out students (non-completers)+	0	1	0	0	3	90	94
To a 2-yr institution	0	0	0	0	0	19	19
To a 4-yr or higher institution	0	1	0	0	3	71	75
Noncompleters still enrolled at GC^	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
Noncompleters not enrolled at GC	4	5	1	4	6	268	288
Part-time, First-time (<12 qtr hrs)**	0	0	0	0	0	49	49
Completed degree in <=3 years	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
Three-Year Graduation Rate						16.3	16.3
Completed degree in <= 2 yrs	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Completed degree in 3 yrs	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Transfer-out students (non-completers)+	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
To a 2-yr institution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
To a 4-yr or higher institution	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Noncompleters still enrolled at GC^	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Noncompleters not enrolled at GC	0	0	0	0	0	39	39

* All first-time and previously enrolled full-time students enrolled Fall 1994

**Enrolled during at GC for the first-time during the base quarter (e.g. Fall 89, Fall 91, Fall 94)

+ Transferred out to other University System institutions

^ Enrolled at GC during Fall 1997

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Associate Degree: Three-Year Graduation Rates
Two-Year Colleges of the University System of Georgia
First-Time, Full-Time Students
Fall 1994 to Spring 1997

Dr. Hamilton, April 1998

Note: Students enrolled for the first-time during the fall of 1994 with a full-time course load (12 or more quarter hours)
Graduation rates are institution-specific.

Type III. Associate Degree Colleges
Category A: Associate Degree Colleges Offering Transfer and Career Programs

	First-Time Full-Time Students Entering Fall 1994 through to Spring 1997								
	Total	Male	Female	Non Resident Alien	Black Non Hispanic	American Indian or Alskn Ntv	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White Non-Hispanic
Abraham Baldwin Agric	690	441	249	15	56	0	4	3	612
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	114	65	49	2	4	0	0	0	108
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	16.5	14.7	19.7	13.3	7.1	ERR	0.0	0.0	17.6
Atlanta Metro	206	91	115	5	198	0	0	0	3
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	8	1	7	0	8	0	0	0	0
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	3.9	1.1	6.1	0.0	4.0	ERR	ERR	ERR	0.0
Darton	380	141	239	0	109	2	1	1	267
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	61	22	39	0	6	0	0	1	54
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	16.1	15.6	16.3	ERR	5.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	20.2
Dekalb	1271	613	658	44	295	0	81	26	825
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	53	14	39	1	11	0	2	1	38
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	4.2	2.3	5.9	2.3	3.7	ERR	2.5	3.8	4.6
East Georgia	145	55	90	1	33	0	0	0	111
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	23	7	16	0	4	0	0	0	19
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	15.9	12.7	17.8	0.0	12.1	ERR	ERR	ERR	17.1
Floyd	445	189	256	0	30	1	5	4	405
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	36	14	22	0	0	0	0	0	36
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	8.1	7.4	8.6	ERR	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.9
Gainesville	376	158	218	4	7	1	4	6	354
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	79	23	56	0	2	0	0	0	77
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	21.0	14.6	25.7	0.0	28.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.8

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	First-Time Full-Time Students Entering Fall 1994 through to Spring 1997								
	Total	Male	Female	Non Resident Alien	Black Non Hispanic	American Indian or Alskn Ntv	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White Non-Hispanic
Gordon	529	209	320	8	79	1	7	3	431
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	106	43	63	1	5	0	3	1	96
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	20.0	20.6	19.7	12.5	6.3	0.0	42.9	33.3	22.3
Macon State	469	170	299	2	122	2	9	4	330
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	38	13	25	0	1	0	1	0	26
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	8.1	7.6	8.4	0.0	0.8	0.0	11.1	0.0	7.9
Middle Georgia	621	407	214	6	216	1	6	2	390
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	79	26	53	0	11	0	2	0	66
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	12.7	6.4	24.8	0.0	5.1	0.0	33.3	0.0	16.9
South Georgia	313	132	181	2	87	0	1	5	218
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	84	25	59	0	5	0	0	2	77
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	26.8	18.9	32.6	0.0	5.7	ERR	0.0	40.0	35.3
Waycross	141	41	100	1	12	0	0	0	128
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	25	9	16	0	3	0	0	0	22
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	17.7	22.0	16.0	0.0	25.0	ERR	ERR	ERR	17.2

Category B: Associate Degree Colleges Offering Transfer, Career and Vocational Technical Programs

Bainbridge	152	61	91	1	33	0	0	1	117
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	21	4	17	1	6	0	0	0	14
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	13.8	6.6	18.7	100.0	18.2	ERR	ERR	0.0	12.0
Coastal GA Community	259	99	160	4	64	3	4	2	182
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	27	8	19	1	2	0	0	0	24
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	10.4	8.1	11.9	25.0	3.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.2
Dalton	567	232	335	1	8	2	2	0	554
3-Yr Grad Rate (N)	73	23	50	1	1	1	0	0	70
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	12.9	9.9	14.9	100.0	12.5	50.0	0.0	ERR	12.6

Two-Yr Colleges	6564	3039	3525	94	1349	13	124	57	4927
3-Yr Grd Rate (N)	827	297	530	7	69	1	8	5	727
3-Yr Grad Rate (%)	12.6	9.8	15.0	7.4	5.1	7.7	6.5	8.8	14.8

*ERR - cannot divide by zero

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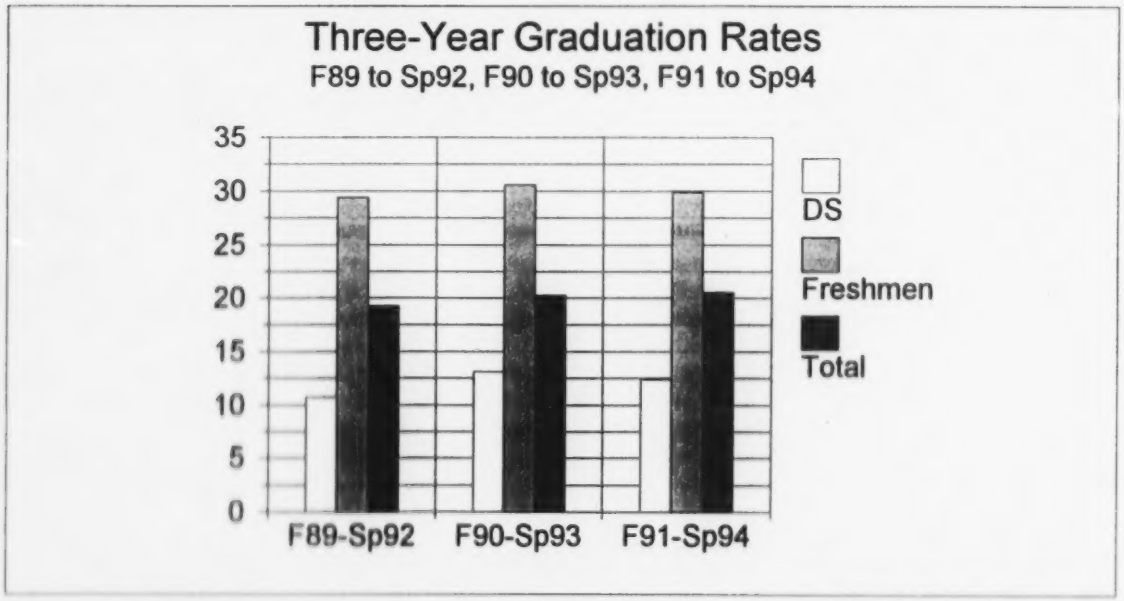
ASSOCIATE DEGREE THREE-YEAR GRADUATION RATES

First-Time Full-Time Entering Students: Fall 89/92 to Spring 91/94

Institution-Specific Graduation Rates



		Fall 1989 to Spr 1992			Fall 1990 to Spr 1993			Fall 1991 to Spr 1994			F91-S94
		Fall 89	92 Graduates		Fall 90	93 Graduates		Fall 91	94 Graduates		Two-Yr
		Enroll	N	Rates	Enroll	N	Rates	Enroll	N	Rates	Rate
Dev.Stds.	Black	17	1	5.9	12	1	8.3	10	0	0.0	2.4
	All Other	300	33	11.0	270	36	13.3	296	38	12.8	6.8
	Total	317	34	10.7	282	37	13.1	306	38	12.4	5.7
Freshmen	Black	4	1	25.0	2	0	0.0	1	0	0.0	14.0
	All Other	265	78	29.4	194	60	30.9	267	80	30.0	25.2
	Total	269	79	29.4	196	60	30.6	268	80	29.9	24.3
Total	Black	21	2	9.5	14	1	7.1	11	0	0.0	4.9
	All Other	565	111	19.6	464	96	20.7	563	118	21.0	16.5
	Total	586	113	19.3	478	97	20.3	574	118	20.6	14.5

Dev.Stds. - Developmental Studies; Freshmen - Regularly Admitted

Rates are Institution-Specific not Systemwide

Three-year institution-specific associate degree graduation rates are calculated as follows: The SIRS files are searched to identify the total numbers of each two-year institution's first-time, full-time entering students who have graduated between the base fall quarter and the year of calculation. Those numbers are totaled cumulatively, quarter by quarter, through the last spring quarter. Once a graduate is counted, that record is permanent, regardless of his/her subsequent enrollment status in the System. Only the graduates of the matriculating institution are counted in calculating its respective graduation rates.

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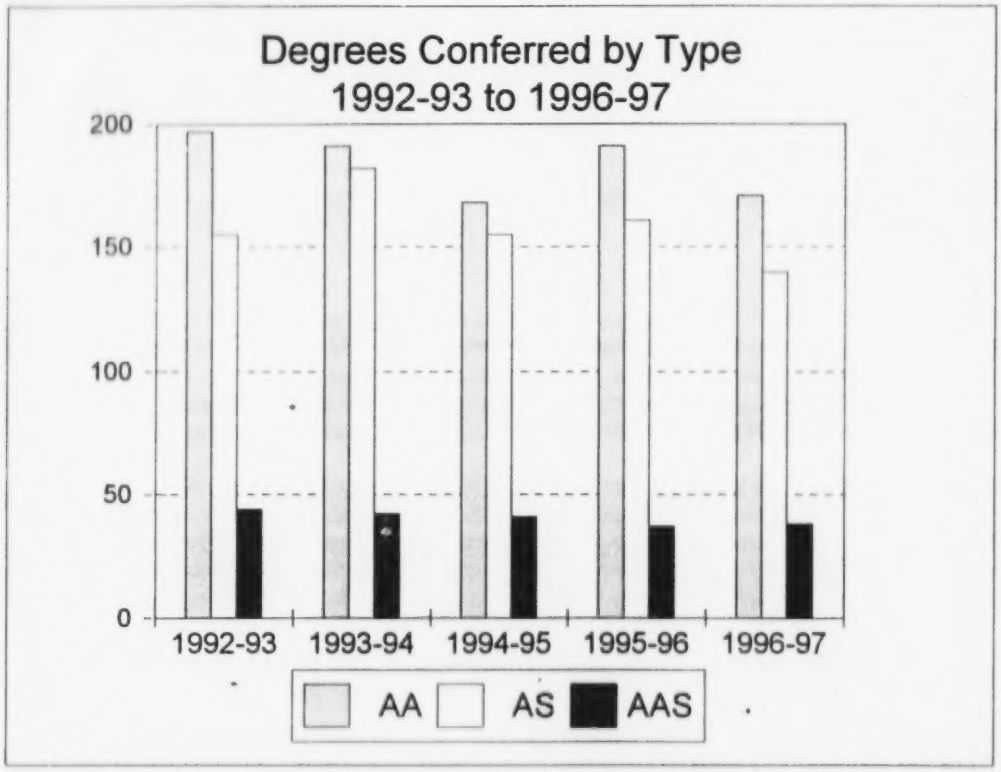
ASSOCIATE DEGREES CONFERRED: TYPE, GENDER, ETHNICITY

Fiscal Years 1993 to 1997



	FY 1993 1992-93	FY 1994 1993-94	FY 1995 1994-95	FY 1996 1995-96	FY 1997 1996-97	4-Year Change #	4-Year Change %
Total	**396**	**415**	**364**	**389**	**349**	**-47**	**-11.9**
Degree Type							
AA	197	191	168	191	171	**-26**	**-13.2**
AS	155	182	155	161	140	**-15**	**-9.7**
AAS	44	42	41	37	38	**-6**	**-13.6**
Gender							
Female	239	272	240	250	204	**-35**	**-14.6**
Male	157	143	124	139	145	**-12**	**-7.6**
Ethnicity							
Black	15	15	8	12	9	**-6**	**-40.0**
Indian	0	3	1	0	1	**1**	**NA**
Asian	3	4	2	3	1	**-2**	**-66.7**
Hispanic	3	2	2	7	3	**0**	**0.0**
White	375	391	351	367	335	**-40**	**-10.7**

NA - not applicable since cannot divide by zero

Source: Degrees and Certificates Conferred, Associate Registrar's Office

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